

# *Living* THE BLACK JACK LEGEND

March 2007

OPERATION  
CHARLIE ROCK  
WOLVERINE

SPC Royce Pydynkowski  
Charlie Rock, 5-20th IN, 2ID



Georgia on my mind  
3-82 FA SELLS TICKETS TO ITS GUN SHOW  
FROM FAT A\*\* TO BAD A\*\*  
HOPE TO HAIFA

INSIDE .....



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## Cover Photo



This month's cover photo was taken during Oper: Wolverine. Charlie Rock Soldiers were patrolling a neighborhood in Baghdad just as a school was letting out. As I looked down a crowded street, I noticed this lone Soldier in a sea of children. We chose this as our cover because it embodies the Black Jack Charge: Prepared to Help. (Photo by SFC Kap Kim)

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**B**lack Jack Soldiers, leaders and families:

In the past few weeks, we have witnessed a historic operation with the goal of breaking the back of insurgent groups and militias and making the streets of Baghdad safer for both us and the Iraqi people. Operation Farq Al Ka-noon, or "Enforcing the Law" kicked off on Feb. 14 with a series of 11 operations in Multinational Division - Baghdad and will continue until we get the job done.

I have told the Iraqi leaders and the people I meet on the streets of Karkh, Doura, Abu T'Shir and Hadar that they can continue to expect our help with fighting our common enemies and with projects to make their lives better. I have told them to expect to see:

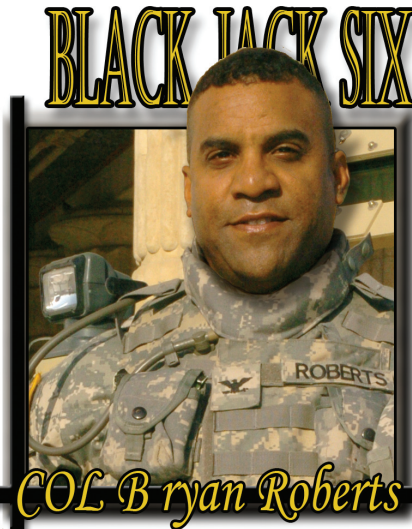
1. Professional, loyal, courageous Security Forces working for their safety.
2. Increased presence of Security Forces in their neighborhoods.
3. Increased number of combined Iraqi Army, National Police, Iraqi Police and Coalition Forces check points, patrols, raids and humanitarian assistance operations.
4. Establishment of Joint Security Stations consisting of Iraqi Army, National Police, Iraqi Police, district and Neighborhood Advisory Council representatives, and Coalition Forces which will serve as a combined headquarters for all Security Forces.

All of these have led and will continue to lead, to increased security. Attacks and murders in our sector have dropped by more than 60 percent since a high in November 2006. Your actions and your sacrifices are making a difference. You are making the streets of our muhallas safer for you, your Soldiers and the people of Iraq.

I continue to rely on you to be the face of Black Jack, the First Cavalry Division and the U.S. Army to our allies and the Iraqi People. Remember the Black Jack Charge and use it as a guidepost; be positive, polite, professional, prepared to help and prepared to kill. We must continue to partner with the Iraqi Security Forces, the elected local government, the local religious and tribal leaders, and the local business leaders and entrepreneurs to make life better for "The People" through security, essential services, economics and governance.

In conclusion, thanks for all that you do; your actions are making a difference every day. Although we're making history, we still have a long way to go. Remain focused, dedicated, vigilant and watch out for your buddy. Together we can and will win; see you on the high ground! BLACK JACK!

*Bryan J. Roberts*



## Living the Black Jack Legend staff says bye and thank you to 2-12

In this issue of the *Living The Black Jack Legend*, our staff spent a little more time with our attached unit: 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.

This month, the 2nd Black Jack Brigade will no longer have this fine battalion. Yet, the staff would like to personally thank many of the great Soldiers who helped make our job fun and exciting these past few months. Know that every time one of our journalists traveled to FOB Falcon, our attached units did their absolute best to help us out in any way, or at least you all made it seem that way.

Special thanks to the LTC Stephen L.A. Michael, commander, 2-12, CSM Charles V. Sasser, and the rest of the "Warriors." A huge "thank you" to SGM Doug Maddi (Congratulations on your promotion) and SGM Cunningham. The men in C, 2-12, who always kept us safe. SSG Lopez, thank you and your crew for the great time and the falafel. SGT Salazar and SSG Grizales for showing SPC Harrison with his first-ever, combat patrol. To the men of B, 2-12 for taking me on mine during Operation III Kings.

As we end our time with this great Army battalion, we would like it to be known that the *Living The Black Jack Legend* staff celebrated your successes and mourned with you during your losses. We wish you continued success and a safe journey back to your homes and your families. drs, kk, abh, rjy, kmh





# Finding the Positive Through all the Negative

*Story and photos by Sgt. Robert Yde  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs*

For Spc. Robert Grandstaff, life has never been better.

Lately, there doesn't seem to be much that the food service specialist assigned to Company D, Forward Support Company, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division cannot accomplish. Since deploying from Fort Hood, Texas in mid-October, Grandstaff has lost nearly 100 pounds through daily exercise and maintaining a strict diet.

The once self-described, "substandard" Soldier has also recently passed the promotion board, and will soon pin on the rank of sergeant -- something he said he never thought he'd see.

"I honestly never thought I would

be able to say, 'I'm promotable,'" the Baker, Fla. native said. "Believe me, I take that 'P' with pride because I've been waiting for it for a long time."

While it seems like nothing can go wrong for him now, life has not always gone so smoothly for Grandstaff. Nearly a year ago, Grandstaff's life hit rock bottom. Severely overweight, his career was going nowhere. Unable to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test or meet the Army's weight standards, Grandstaff was on the verge of being booted out of the Army.

On top of that, he was deep in debt from also supporting his wife's family.

Grandstaff sunk into a deep depression -- one which he was just never able

to recover from.

"I've seen what life's like at its lowest and I didn't like it," Grandstaff said of that time in his life. "I had sunk to the lowest life had to offer, financially, mentally and emotionally to where I couldn't even take life anymore."

Early one February morning last year, as he was leaving for physical training, Grandstaff grabbed a knife from the kitchen and after arriving to his physical training formation cut his wrist.

"When I cut myself and saw the blood running down my arm; I just thought to myself, 'what have I done,'" Grandstaff said. "That day would begin to shape a new mentality."

While his outlook on life would begin to change after that day, it would take many months before Grandstaff was ready to make the necessary physical changes in his life.

After a few months of treatment and recovery, his company's top noncommissioned officer, 1st Sgt. Derrick Smith, sat him down to discuss his future options with him. During this talk, Smith told him that he believed separation from the Army was probably in his best interest.

"It was my opinion, and my commander's opinion, that Specialist Grandstaff should leave the military," Smith explained.

However, Grandstaff was not ready to give up on his military career yet.

"He told me he wanted to stay in the military, and he needed some help," Smith said. "He explained to me that he would listen to me, and do whatever it took to turn his life and his career."

Grandstaff credits his conversation with Smith as the starting point of what would begin a remark-

able turn around.

"It was a conversation that would stick in my head for months," Grandstaff said. "That would start a chain reaction to something I couldn't even begin to realize."

The first thing he knew he had to do was get himself in shape so he could pass the APFT, something he had never been able to do since joining the unit.

"I explained to him that I could get him to pass his PT test only if he forgot everything he previously knew and would just listen," Smith said. "He took those words to heart."

According to Smith, although Grandstaff's heart and mind were in the right place, it took a while for his body to catch up.

"In the beginning he fell out of most of the runs, but he never quit," Smith said. "He used to throw up and get back in formation. To witness this would almost break your heart."

Grandstaff said his company would run every other morning usually on a four-mile route which is commonly known at Fort Hood as 'coast-to-coast.'

"When I was back at Hood, we would run from Clear Creek Road to Fort Hood Street and back, and I could make it about a quarter of the way and that was it," Grandstaff said.

Although he never gave up, Grandstaff never did pass a PT test while at Fort Hood, but just weeks before his unit deployed to Iraq, he would witness something that would turn his goal of changing his life into a burning desire.

"Sept. 21, 7:41 p.m. I remember that night so well," Grandstaff said emphatically. "That's when my son started crawling."

Grandstaff, his wife and their eight-month-old son were visiting a



neighbor who was set to deploy any day, and that night as Grandstaff and his neighbor sat talking, his son, who he said had never really tried to move around before, raced by him.

“Once he got down on that carpet he just took off like a motorboat,” he said.

It was a proud moment for Grandstaff as well as an eye-opening experience for him.

“I realized that he’s getting older,” he said of his son. “That’s when I made up my mind that when I got [to Iraq] I was going to get serious.”

For Grandstaff, this would be his second deployment to Iraq, and he decided he was going to make the most of it – something he said he did not do during his first tour.

“I never really hit the gym that much. All I did was watch a lot of movies and played a lot of Playstation,” Grandstaff said of his first deployment. “I accomplished nothing except gaining weight. This time I planned on accomplishing a lot.”

Once he arrived in Kuwait, Grandstaff used whatever free time he had to work out, and a couple of weeks later, when he arrived in Baghdad, he took his work-out routine up another notch.

Five days a week, Grandstaff hits the gym at 5:00 a.m. where he spends anywhere from an hour to an hour-an-a-half working out. Much of time is spent on a treadmill.

“I love to run now,” Grandstaff said. “My wife bought me a pair of shoes about two months ago, and those things didn’t last very long.”

It wasn’t like this in the beginning though. When he first started running, Grandstaff said he would set the treadmill at five miles-an-hour and could barely make it two miles.

“You have to start somewhere though and just keep going,” he said, and now after months of running Grandstaff said when he runs he will not run less than four miles at a time.

Exercise was not the only major lifestyle change for Grandstaff. He also knew he had to change his diet. Until recently, Grandstaff has always been big, weighing 220 pounds by the time he was in fifth grade, and has always had a substantial appetite.

“My wife loves to cook,” he said, “and I would

eat whatever she’d make - tacos, fajitas, pizza, hamburgers, whatever.”

When he was planning his new diet, Grandstaff said he knew it would be tough. Not only had he not been eating well for most of his life, but he also spends 12 hours a day in the dining facility surrounded by all types of tempting foods he knew would have to be off-limits.

“It was hard. There’s a lot of temptation there,” he said of working in the DFAC.

However, the upside to his job gave him one distinct advantage and that was he knew exactly how to put together a healthy diet.

“Tuna fish, soup and salad,” Grandstaff said of his new diet. “I’ve become a major health fanatic.”

“I consume, somewhere in the vicinity of about 1,500 calories a day,” he added. “I don’t starve myself, but I make sure that I don’t go over.”

This combination of exercise and dieting has helped Grandstaff lose an incredible amount of weight in a surprisingly short amount of time.

“I got lucky,” he said. “Mine happened fast and my life did a complete 180.”

This kind of modesty is characteristic of Grandstaff, who weighed 292 pounds when he arrived in theater and now weighs

just under 200 pounds. His pants size has

dropped from a size 48 to a size 36.

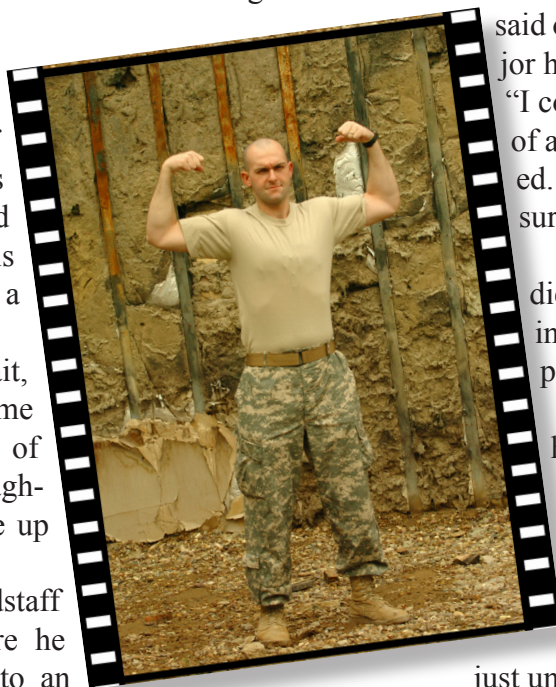
“I don’t think of myself as anybody special,” he said. “I’ve lost 90-something pounds: so what. I’ve got plenty of other goals that I haven’t met yet.”

One of those goals was being promoted to the rank of sergeant and during his squadron’s January promotion board he earned the maximum score of 150 points.

“He made a remarkable appearance at the squadron’s promotion board,” 4-9 Cav.’s top noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Major James Daniels said of Grandstaff. “He displayed great leadership abilities and he will become an outstanding noncommissioned officer.”

While it may still be several months before he is officially pinned and promoted, Grandstaff is already setting his sights on becoming a staff sergeant by the end of next year.

“I’m about to be an E-5 and just after WLC



(warriors leaders course) after we get back, I want to go to the E-6 board with a passion,” Grandstaff said.

Grandstaff is also studying for another board appearance: the one to gain entrance into the coveted Sergeant Audie Murphy Club.

“I’ve already have a real thick Sergeant Audie Murphy study guide, that I’m studying now so that when I become an E-5, I can jump on that,” he said. Grandstaff is not only thinking about his military career when it comes to setting his goals. He recently enrolled for distance education classes at Central Texas College.

“Once I send them a degree plan, all they have to do is activate my account and then I just start taking classes,” he said. “I plan on being enrolled in a college class here in the next month.”

He plans on working toward a degree in hospitality services, food and beverage management and plans to continue working in the food service industry after retiring from the Army.

“As long as human beings live on this earth, you’re always going to need someone to prepare your food,” he explained of his future plans.

According to Smith, when Grandstaff first told him that he wanted to stay in the Army and would do whatever it took to make that happen, he was doubtful having heard it all before from other Soldiers, but what he has seen from him has exceeded any expectations that he imagined possible.

“You can’t imagine how a first sergeant feels when you can actually see positive results like this,” Smith said of Grandstaff’s turnaround. “I have no idea where he gets his heart from. His attitude bleeds down to all of my Soldiers.”

Grandstaff no longer has any problems with passing his PT test and scored 245 out of 300 points on his most recent one. Although this was by far the highest score that he has ever earned, Grandstaff said it still didn’t satisfy him.

“I’m showing some improvement, but I hope to max it,” he said, “and after I get a 300 on my PT test, then next time I’ll do a few more push-ups or sit-ups or run a little faster. I’ll go extended scale and aim even higher.”

Now that running is no longer a problem for him, Grandstaff said there is one more thing he is looking forward to – returning to Fort Hood and running coast-to-coast.

“That’s always been eating at me,” he said.

“First Sergeant would always say, ‘Grandstaff, you ready to run coast-to-coast with me,’ but I never could finish it,” he added. “When I get back I’m going to run coast-to-coast with him, and I’m going to be in the first rank of that formation.”

More than anything though, Grandstaff said he can’t wait to see his wife’s face when she sees him again for the first time.

Grandstaff said his wife hasn’t seen a picture of him since he weighed 230 pounds and that she keeps begging him to send a current picture back to her.

“I want it to be a surprise,” he explained. “I look forward to seeing her eyes when I get off that plane.”

According to Grandstaff, it is his love for his family that keeps him going, and he said that it was his devotion to them that he rediscovered after his attempted suicide last year.

Although he didn’t die that day, in a way he did, only to recreate himself.

“This is the new and improved Grandstaff. The old Grandstaff died,” he said. “The past is the past, and all I can see now is the future.”

“Although I may have a constant reminder of what I’ve done, and it may always be there,” Grandstaff said looking down at the scar on his wrist. “It will always remind me to push a little bit harder. It will always be there to remind me, ‘hey, I can’t believe my life got that low.’ I hit so rock bottom that day, but now all I can see is the future.”

For the new Grandstaff, as he likes to refer to himself, the future is full of unlimited possibilities. All he has to do is decide what wants to set his mind on next.

“It’s just setting goals and reaching them. Maxing my PT test, I haven’t officially pinned on my E-5 yet, I want to go the E-6 board next year, there’s still plenty left to do,” he said. “If you just set your heart and soul to something, one can accomplish almost anything.”



# Dark Horse Delivers

## 4-9 Cav drops food, other supplies to one of Baghdad's worst muhallas

*Story & Photos by Sgt. Robert Yde  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs*

Residents of Haifa Street have grown accustomed to violence living in one of Baghdad's most dangerous areas. The impoverished area has been the scene of several battles between coalition forces and insurgents and is infamous for the sectarian violence that occurs there on a daily basis.

Snipers routinely operate out of the many high-rise buildings that line the road causing many of the locals to live like prisoners in their own homes.

"It is very violent and we're sick of it. We're afraid for our families" one local national said describing the situation.

Although they have been operating here for a couple of months, Soldiers from Troop C, 4-9 Cav., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have recently taken over control of this notorious street and its surrounding areas.

"The biggest thing we'd like to do is get a good, stable measure of security in conjunction with the Iraqi forces, so those people can feel safe," explained Troop C commander, Capt. John Gilliam of his goals for the Haifa St. area. "They can go to the market, their children can go to school, and they can just live without the fear of someone knocking on their door and threatening to kill them."

According to Gilliam the first step toward accomplishing this goal is gaining the trust of the locals in order to build a relationship so they can work to solve their problems together. With this idea in mind, two of Troop C's first missions onto Haifa St. were to provide food, water and medical assistance to the residents there Jan. 28 and 29.

Working with the Red Crescent, an agency similar to the Red Cross, Soldiers escorted the items from a mosque in Mansoor that had been serving as a collection point Jan. 29. Immediately after arriving to the distribution point on Haifa St. people began to flock to the much needed supplies.

"I think it's the first time, really, anybody's done any humanitarian missions on Haifa St. in a



long time, especially U.S. forces. Most of the focus up here has been on dealing with the violence,” Gilliam, a native of Charlottesville, Va. said. “The past few days has been one of the first real times that a lot of people who have been unable to leave their house or who have felt afraid to go out on the streets have been able to come out and get some food and water and some much needed medical supplies.”

As people carried off boxes of water and bags of rice, bread and canned vegetables they stopped to voice their concerns to the Soldiers.

“The majority of the people have been very excited and very appreciative of receiving food, but they still have security issues on Haifa St,” Gilliam explained. “There are still people who like to do sniper attacks and small-arms attacks but we’re doing our best right now to kill or capture those people and restore some security down here.”

Gilliam’s assessment of the area quickly proved true as the Soldiers were forced to move the distribution sight after they began receiving indirect fire about 30 minutes after setting up.

“They were walking the mortars in fairly close to us to the point that we had to react and push a section down to try to identify the shooters,” Gilliam said. “Then we started taking some small-arms fire from the same area, so we downloaded as much food as we could at that location and then we took the rest to another location.”

Gilliam said that just about every time his Soldiers have come into the area they have received some type of contact from insurgents and it was just one more thing they had to factor in when making preparations for the humanitarian mission.

“When you bring in a bunch of stuff like that in one location, obviously you’re going to attract a lot of people, a lot of civilians. It’s a high payoff target for the insurgents to take out that many people,” he said. “Our guys have to be that much more vigilant when we’re doing these missions.”

After moving down a few blocks and reestablishing a new distribution point the trucks were quickly downloaded with assistance from Iraqi army soldiers in the area.

As people carried supplies by the armfuls back to their homes, they were obviously thankful to the Soldiers and the Red Crescent.

“We thank you and appreciate the support for the people here,” one local resident said after taking several bags from one of the

trucks.

According to Gilliam, this type of feedback has been common, and as he pointed out it’s not only the people who are helped by getting food and water, but he and his Soldiers benefit from the information they gain from the citizen.

“When we do big events like this, it gets a lot of people out. The locals see that we’re here to stay and we’re here to help them and they’re inclined to come and talk to us,” he explained. “That’s how we generate a lot of our success in the area. That’s how we figure out who the insurgents are in the area.”

Humanitarian missions such as this one will continue on Haifa St., Gilliam said, and as he and his Soldiers continue to foster trust with the locals, the security situation should improve.

“I think these past few days have been a good first step toward getting a good working relationship with the sheiks and the local leaders,” he said. “They’ve seen that we’re here to help them and that our sole purpose is to provide them security and bring some stability to them. It makes you feel like your making a difference.”





## 2nd BCT Public Affairs

Living the Black Jack Legend Magazine  
OTF Photo Gallery Exhibit  
in The Black Jack Media Center



# Hadher's Heaters

## 1-14 fuels the fire in Southern Baghdad

Story and Photos by Sgt. Robert Yde  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

With most areas in Baghdad receiving a limited amount of electricity each day, families have come to depend on generators to provide power for their homes. While this option is popular for many families, acquiring the fuel to run a generator can be a problem.

In an effort to help with the fuel shortage, Soldiers from Task Force 1-14 Cav., attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, in cooperation with the Iraqi National Police, distributed kerosene to the residents of the Al-Hadher neighborhood after conducting a joint cordon and search operation in the area Jan. 18.

The neighborhood is one of the poorest in 1-14 Cav.'s area-of-operations and it was evident by the crowd's enthusiasm that the kerosene was greatly needed.

"Out of our sector this is probably the neediest and poorest neighborhood," explained platoon leader, 1st Lt. Stephen Hornsberger. "If they needed the kerosene anywhere, it was probably here."

After spending a couple of hours searching homes in the area, Soldiers and police officers carried the cans of kerosene around the neighborhood as the locals flocked to them with their empty cans.

According to Troop C commander, Capt. Adam Grim, giving away the kerosene is a goodwill gesture that he hopes will strengthen the developing relationship between the Soldiers, police officers and locals.

"Our squadron commander talked to all the commanders and basically said, 'What's something good we can do as a positive thing to reintegrate the national police and build trust in the community?'" the Orange Park, Fla. native explained. "The thing we came up with was trying to get them more access to fuel, whether its benzene, propane or kerosene. The

easiest one to get was kerosene which we handed out today."

Grim said that in the past, the Soldiers and police officers have handed out other things like blankets and clothes, but fuel seems to have the greatest effect.

"I think the thing that has the biggest impact directly is fuel," he said. "We do get a lot of clothes from the States to hand out, but fuel is a really big ticket item that a lot of people just can't get."

"We complete the search and then at the end, we have the national police hand out the kerosene," he said. "It's a symbol of good will that helps the community and national police interact on something more than just doing a search."

Since the squadron started handing out kerosene, Grim said that he has seen some change in his interaction with the locals.

"It definitely helps you to get more friendly faces and more waves and people say 'thank you,'" Grim explained. However, he noted that the fuel that his Soldiers and the police provide is only enough to last for a few days, and solving the overall problem of the fuel shortage in Baghdad will take some time.

"It's a little something we can do. It's better than not having anything, and you can directly see it helping the people," Grim said. "When you can go out and give someone something or watch the national police give someone something you know at the end of the day something positive was done."

**Right:** CPT Adam Grim pours out some gas to some eager locals

**Below:** An Iraqi Police-man helps pass out gas to a crowd.





*Spc. Matt Durbin (left) and Sgt. John Duvall search a room.*

## Community Relations

*2-12 uses rapport to gather intel*

*Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs*

Face time. It seems to be a term used more by celebrities than Soldiers, but as Iraqi Army and National Policemen go on patrols with coalition forces, Face Time is something on unit is saying is very important to their mission of capturing the bad guys.

On what's become a normal patrol mission in Baghdad's northwest Al Doura, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division Soldiers are using the results of their "face time" to help catch the enemy.

"Our presence is very important," said Staff Sgt. Juan A. Lopez, a Bronx, N.Y. native. "The [locals] will talk to us and tell us where the caches and insurgence are, they will tell us about new people who have moved into their neighborhood and maybe are threatening them ... It's a positive we are here everyday. That way, little-by-little, we can make a difference."

On a patrol of one neighborhood in the humvees, children were peeking out of their gates and waiving to the Soldiers through their bulletproof glass. "Wave at them man," Lopez told one of his Soldiers in the vehicle. "They might remember you later and say, 'hey, I waived at that Soldier when I was a little kid.'"

Lopez, who, back in the Bronx, has a Yemenese friend who taught him some Arabic phrases, uses it to reach out to the community. When he and his Soldiers



*Staff Sgt. Juan Lopez (left) and Pfc. Kee Johnson patrol a local area due to the violence.*

walk around the market, they are swarmed by young children. Lopez uses his limited Arabic to joke with the children.

In one of the muhallas, or neighborhoods, there is a thriving marketplace within what used to be a traffic circle. The locals go there to buy fresh fish, produce, clothes, shoes and other items. As recent as a month ago, insurgent activity forced a lot of them to stay away from the market. Lopez and his unit had seen some fierce fighting there. During the battle, the coalition forces fought the insurgents out of the neighborhood.

In a way, the locals have, in casual meetings with the coalition forces, learned to embrace them. During their cordon and search missions the Soldiers commonly refer to as "block parties," it's not uncommon for the locals to ask Soldiers and Iraqi National Police officers to come in



*Sgt. John Duvall*



*l market. Until recently, many of the locals could not shop*



*Pfc. Orry Griffin keeps an eye on the situation.*



**LEFT** - Sgt. Gary Crawford walks down a flight of stairs after a search.

**RIGHT** - The Chosen's mascot: a dolls head they used to intimidate the enemy adorns the front of their vehicle.



and have some tea.

According to Lopez, a lot of the people their unit has caught have been a direct result of their presence patrols and the bonds they make during them.

"One day, a lady told us to take someone because he was a cell leader," he recalled. "It wouldn't be like that if we weren't out here. We found a lot of guys and caches because of all the tips [from the locals]."

During a recent block party, Lopez and his team searched a house of a couple with a small child. When

asked how they felt about being searched, the husband said he didn't mind it – that it made their community safer to have Soldiers around.

Another important relationship they have fostered is the one they have with the Iraqi National Police.

"We can't do everything, so that's why we work with the NPs (National Police)," he said. "And now that the Iraqi Army is here, the [insurgents] are pulling out. It makes a difference, and that's what they want."

# Having a BLAST!

## 2-12's Baker Co finds IED with help from the 'hood

by Spc. Alexis Harrison  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Roadside bombs wound and kill American Soldiers, Iraqi soldiers and policemen, and innocent civilians caught in the ongoing struggle of coalition troops against anti-Iraqi forces on the streets of the capital.

What started as a routine joint patrol through one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the Al Doura District, Soldiers from 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Co. B, 2-12 Infantry attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, caught a man red-handed planting one of the deadly devices Jan. 25.

Staff Sgt. Drew Preston was in the lead vehicle of the convoy. He was already busy scanning his path into the neighborhood when he saw a man halfway up a light pole on the corner of the road.

At first, he didn't think much of it. The man could've been running a power line, a phone cable or something else. Almost instinctively, he followed the hanging wire to see it went straight into the ground in nearly the exact location an IED was found the day prior.

"Since we found the [bomb] yesterday, I've had

my eyes peeled," said Preston.

The platoon dismounted and got the man down from the pole without a fight. After a quick search of him, the Soldiers found a "shopping list" and even a diagram describing how to build an IED.

As quickly as the bomb was found, the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team was called. The Soldiers secured the area and waited for the team to come destroy the 120 mm shell they found.

The company commander, Capt. Jim Keirse, was momentarily satisfied that a bomb was taken off the street, but kept his men aware of the fact that there was still a mission to accomplish.

Before the troops had left their base of operations, they had already received a tip on the whereabouts of an IED, and their mission was to find it, secure the area and call EOD. The one they found when they arrived to the neighborhood was just them being in the right place at the right time Kiersey said.

He attributes some of the success they've had to tips from the locals. Without it, he said they wouldn't be able to pinpoint the location of some of the bombs they find.

"We're getting tips daily from locals," Keirse said. "In an area like the one we were in where people bury IEDs and there's constantly small-arms fire, you're going to make a little more effort to talk to those folks."

"Gaining the public trust is about identifying and supporting the right leaders, and a lot of it is just presence and putting a human face on coalition forces. If you're just driving around in Humvees, you make no interaction with people"

"As your leaders start to go into a neighborhood and develop working relationships with informants, they begin to realize these are people just regular families trying to live day to day."

"Eventually, it's just a natural process. Once you start to interface with people, you begin to develop a relationship, and you start to have an appreciation for them."

"You have to get out there every day in order to make any improvements."



Charlie Rock Soldiers' presence in Abu Discher has allowed the local children to walk to and from school safely.

*Spc. David Flores checks out a rooftop during a search.*

## Charlie Rock flushes insurgents out in raid

*Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs*

Most of the time, success is measured by big, statistical figures. Other times, success is measured by something else – something numbers can't ever support.

When Company C, "Charlie Rock," 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, headed out to Baghdad's Abu Discher District, in an operation dubbed "Wolverine," Feb. 8 to find several suspected terrorist, they were looking to score the big numbers.

Through a combined effort with Apocalypse Company, 1st Battalion, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Inf. Div., a battalion of Iraqi National Police and the

Charlie Rock's Soldiers searched more than 60 homes looking for suspected terrorists.

Operation Wolverine took Charlie Rock back out to an old area of Baghdad they haven't operated out of since last October.

"I was a little nervous," admitted Spc. David Florez, of Racine, Wis., who conducted the searches. "I was nervous being on top of all the roofs."

In recent months though, Charlie Rock Soldiers have had a lot of success with finding their targets. During Operation Wolverine, they didn't nab everyone, but what they achieved was something greater, according to 1st Lt. Kyle Packard, 1st Platoon leader, from West De Moines, Iowa.

"It's unusual for a mission this size to not be able to find any targets," he admitted. "I think it's still a success though because they cannot conduct their usual activities. Everyone knows we are out in the area, and it makes them leave."

Charlie Rock had the task of finding about a dozen different, suspects believed to be involved in terrorist activities through a seemingly quiet residential area.

"By the joint and coalition forces and the National Police being here, we are denying high-level [insurgency] from operating here," said Packard.

Through their past seven months, their company has captured more than 50 suspected terrorists and found about five cells they were operating out of.

For Staff Sgt. Ernest Pablo, a squad leader from Barrigada, Guam, he and his team do their best during their cordon and search missions, but he admits that it is hard sometimes because the suspected insurgence move around so much.

According to Packard, Charlie Rock's philosophy on its cordon and search mission of making sure that they deny anyone inside their sector of operations has kept down the sectarian violence.

"Sometimes, you don't have to find targets for a mission to be a success," he said. "We can simply deny them the opportunity to operate."

(right) Spc. Christopher Petticrew, (foreground) keeps an eye out while Sgt. Charles Crawford questions a detainee.



# HOT GUNS

## On the Job with the Red Dragons from the 3-82 Field Artillery Regiment

Story and Design by Spc. Alexis Harrison  
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Artillery has always been considered the king of battle, but when troops from 3-82 Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division arrived in country a few months ago, they found out their job was less about artillery than they might have thought.

The Soldiers have been stationed on FOB Union III performing escort duties for the U.S. embassy and missions handed down from the brigade. While most of the Soldiers stay busy with the “Red Dragon Express” as it’s called, some Soldiers get a chance to practice and perform the duties that truly make them the king of battle.

Several miles south of their home base in the International Zone is where a platoon of artillery men get rotated in for a month-long stay to keep their mobile howitzers hot and ready for any mission they might get called for. They call it “keeping the guns hot.”

Round the clock, Soldiers man a few Paladins and stay ready

to send rounds downrange when needed.

Sgt. Steven Lucero and his team have the overnight shift on the guns. As soon as the shift change is over, Lucero, a section chief, readies his team by performing



all the necessary checks in his machine and monitoring the radio.

“The call for fire could come at any time, so we have to be ready to go,” said the Edgewood, N.M., native.

Lucero and his team went through a few dry-fire exercises to make sure they were on point with

their targeting system. Although they didn’t fire anything, the team worked furiously to get the imaginary rounds fired.

What may seem as simple as firing an oversized rifle actually involves quite a bit of science. Not only do the gunners know how to aim the cannon, they know the properties of the propellant, the exact timing of the fuses and every step it takes to send a massive 155 mm round out into the battlefield.

“Everybody on the crew is just as important as the next guy,” Lucero said. “We all know how to run the gun.”

While the night lingers, the temperature drops. The crew does everything it can to stay warm and awake during its 12-hour shift through the night.

Just as it seemed nothing was going to happen, a call came over the radio for a possible mission. In seconds, the crew was on its feet and in position.

Sometimes, the Soldiers are tasked with firing illumination rounds out into the dark sky to help



fellow Soldiers out on the streets see better and possibly spot any insurgent activity.

Sometimes, the Soldiers get to fire more lethal, high-explosive (HE), rounds. According to everyone in the paladin, these rounds are capable of obliterating just about anything they come into contact with.

As they stand ready, another call comes across the radio telling them to stand down.

Disappointment flashes across the faces of the troops from 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Batt. B.

“We wererhoping to get to fire tonight, but it doesn’t look like that’s going to happen,”

Lucero said.

“We hope to get to fire at something every night we’re out here. It makes the long nights worthwhile.”

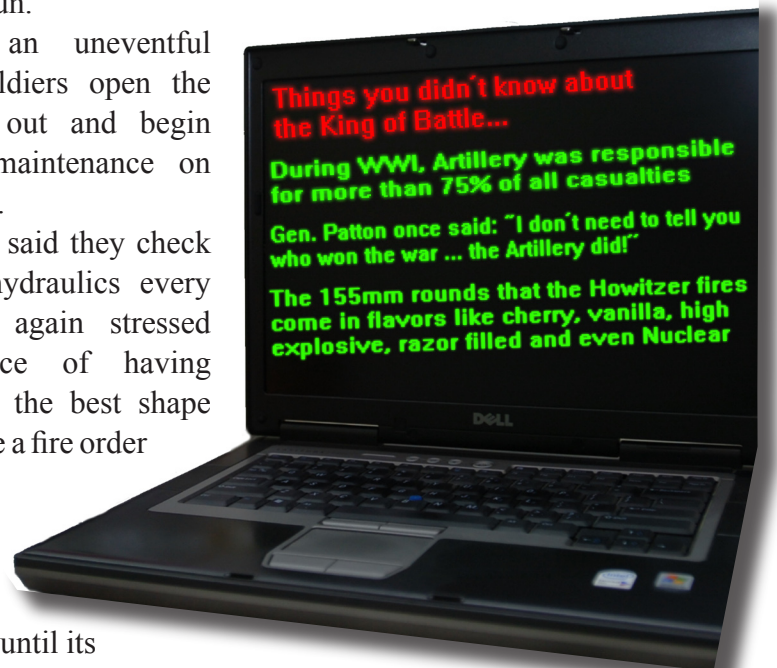
Hours later, the sun breaks over the horizon signaling not only daylight but the near end to another long shift for the four Soldiers manning the gun.

After an uneventful night, the Soldiers open the hatch, climb out and begin preventative maintenance on their machines.

Lucero said they check the oil and hydraulics every morning. He again stressed the importance of having his vehicle in the best shape possible in case a fire order came down.

After the checks and services the team waits until its

relief shows up. After a long night of standing at the ready, the Soldiers get chow and go back to their rooms to get some rest for the next night’s shift when they can have another chance to prove themselves as the king of battle.



# Georgian soldiers find pride working

Story and Photos by Spc. Alexis Harrison

2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

A little more than two years ago, the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry (light) Battalion of the Georgian Army didn't even exist. A few years before that, the army itself didn't exist.

Now, the Georgians have joined thousands of other coalition-force elements to take the job of manning checkpoints surrounding the heavily-fortified International Zone. Although they may be new to the game of war, the soldiers find unlikely similarities between themselves and the Iraqis.

The Georgians know firsthand what it was like to have their country tumble into a dismal state. In 1991, just a few years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Georgia declared its independence and had already begun standing up its own army.

Now, the Georgians are trying to help Iraqis do the same for their country. They protect the heart of the capital where lawmakers are busy governing the unstable country.

The battalion's chief of staff, Capt. Merabi Tabidze said it's an all too familiar feeling to him and his troops.

"We have a mission to keep Iraqis free just as we did more than 10 years ago," Tabidze

said. "We are proud of this opportunity to help the coalition and the Iraqis."

Although the Georgian Army isn't large in comparison to the American, they didn't hesitate when they were given the opportunity to prove their worth in a combat environment.

"We are one of the largest contributors to the coalition effort," said the battalion commander, Maj. Besik Jajanidze. "We are a very small country, but we wanted to help rebuild the walls of



# BATUMI



Iraq

alongside American and other coalition forces to show our support."

Along one of the outer walls of the battalion's barracks is painted "Remember, you are Georgian" in Georgian handwriting.

One of the liaisons, Georgian Air Force Lt. Col. Kakhaber Kharshiladze, said it's a reminder to all the soldiers living and working in Iraq to remember the struggles their country had to overcome and to always take pride and be professional while serving as the "face of

# ing alongside Coalition Forces in IZ

Georgia” in Iraq.

Last September, the battalion arrived in country and immediately began working with the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The Georgian troops manned several checkpoints and entry points in the International Zone.

Today, they still man those checkpoints. However the battalion’s mission is almost complete. They only have six-month rotations into the country, and several of the soldiers said that

make a difference in my country,” he said. “Now I can help work with coalition forces to help make a difference here.”

Chitanava is much like any young man. He enjoys competing in traditional sports like soccer and also Georgian favorites like wrestling.

Just because the Georgians are in Iraq doesn’t mean they can’t enjoy things like they did at home. Last December, they celebrated one of their holidays, King George’s Day, with a feast of traditional home-cooked

meals and several strength competitions like wrestling, armwrestling and even a pull-a-humvee-with-your-teeth demonstration

in front of several coalition leaders including Col. Bryan Roberts, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, and the brigade’s top noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. James Lee.

One of the Black Jack Brigade’s battalions has been

working very closely with the “Batumi” Battalion from Georgia. 4-9 Cavalry has a very similar task in watching over the International Zone and assorted checkpoints.

“We like to think we are much like the ‘cowboys’ from Texas ... the Black Jack Brigade,” said Kharshiladze.



## BROTHERS

six

months is long enough.

Like American troops, many of the Georgian fighters left behind family and friends to fulfill a duty they were once bound to, but in recent years had changed to a voluntary status.

For Cpl. George Chitanava it’s his first time away from home. He’d only left school a few weeks when he made the decision to enlist.

“When I was young, all I wanted to do was



# Team IZ defeathers Falcon on gridiron during inaugural football matchup

*Story and photos by Sgt. Robert Yde  
2nd Brigade Public Affairs*

Although the Super Bowl was still a day a way, by Saturday afternoon the biggest game in Baghdad had been decided.

Dubbed the Baghdad Bowl, two 15-man teams made up of Soldiers assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division donned Indianapolis Colts and Chicago Bears jerseys and squared off in a flag-football game sponsored by CBS Sports Feb.3.

On hand to referee the game, which was played on "Black Jack" Field located on FOB Prosperity, was CBS football analyst Randy Cross.

According to Cross, the idea of hosting a pre-Super Bowl game in Baghdad came to him after a six-day visit he made to Afghanistan last year.

"When I came back I suggested to the CBS people, because I knew we had the Super Bowl, we should do something in Baghdad," Cross explained. "I volunteered to come over here then and they approved it about a month-and-a half, two months ago."

CBS provided the game jerseys, with a team of Soldiers based in the International Zone representing the Colts and a team of Soldiers based at FOB Falcon, which is located in southern Baghdad, representing the Bears.



Footage from the game was aired during CBS's Super Bowl pre-game program.

Before beginning the game all the players gathered at mid-field where Cross performed the traditional coin toss with a coin specially minted in commemoration of the San Francisco 49ers Super Bowl XVI victory 25 years ago over the Cincinnati Bengals.

"I'm a fan, I've got to be honest," Cross, who won his three Super Bowl rings with the 49ers, joked before the toss.

After winning the coin toss, Team Falcon opted to begin the game on offense and drove down the field for the first score. However, their touchdown was quickly negated by Team IZ, who scored on their first play from scrimmage.

On their second play Team IZ pulled ahead and never looked

back after a long touchdown pass put them up 14-7.

"I'm having a good time," Team IZ's, Capt. Craig Gary said at halftime. "This is an awesome opportunity for Soldiers."

For all the Soldiers involved, both the players and spectators, the game offered a much welcomed break from their daily combat

# Baghdad



# Falcon vs.

# nd Bowl



## Team IZ

missions.

"I think it's a really great thing," Staff Sgt. Michael Rathbun, who is assigned to 1-18 IN and played for Team Falcon, said. "Many of us are living out on combat out posts so it's the first time we've been on a FOB for a while."

During the game, t-shirts and hats provided by CBS were

passed out to the crowd by Team Falcon cheerleaders, Spc. Erin Braun and Spc. Shaunette Buntain, both medics with 15<sup>th</sup> BSB.

"We are the Falcon pride," Buntain said. "We got together and we figured this would boost the morale a little bit."

Not even the support of their cheerleaders however could help Team Falcon overcome Team IZ, who won by a touchdown, 32-25.

After the game, the players once again gathered at mid-field, where Cross presented both team captains with a game ball. Another ball autographed by CBS's entire NFL Today crew was accepted by 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT commander, Col. Bryan Roberts on behalf of the entire brigade.

"At the end of the day we'll



all leave here victorious because we're all members of the 'Black Jack' team," Roberts told his Soldiers. "And we've got a heck of a lot of people out there depending on us to wake up tomorrow morning and get back out there into the fight."

According to Cross, the event was all about doing something for the Soldiers who are out everyday in the fight.

"It's not about us or CBS," Cross said, "It's about you guys and getting a chance to come out here and do this for you. We appreciate everything you guys do."



# WARRIORS OPEN JSS IN AL DOURA

STORY BY SPC. ALEXIS HARRISON  
2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Two days before its grand opening celebration, the Joint Security Station was already a functional epicenter for security operations in one of the most dangerous parts of the capital.

Al Doura continues to be a focus for coalition forces trying to maintain a peace in the neighborhood. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, has been manning the station alongside its Iraqi Army and police counterparts in hopes of breathing a refreshing breath of peaceful air back into the notorious district.

The security center brings all elements of the American and Iraqi security together in one location. It is home to National Police, Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army and American forces.

For the Soldiers of Company A, 2-12, duty at the station isn't necessarily what they had been used to. In recent weeks, the main focus of their efforts have been securing the Doura market area during its cleanup and revamping.

Along with the arduous task of securing the market, the new task of keeping the JSS manned has proved to be only a small challenge for the troops from Ft. Carson, Colo.

The company's top-ranking noncommissioned officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Doug Maddi, said it might not be the most glamorous or tough mission his troops are assigned to, but it shows the agile and multi-faceted approach they take to the fight against anti-Iraqi forces.

He said while his troops work closely with the Iraqi Army and police he

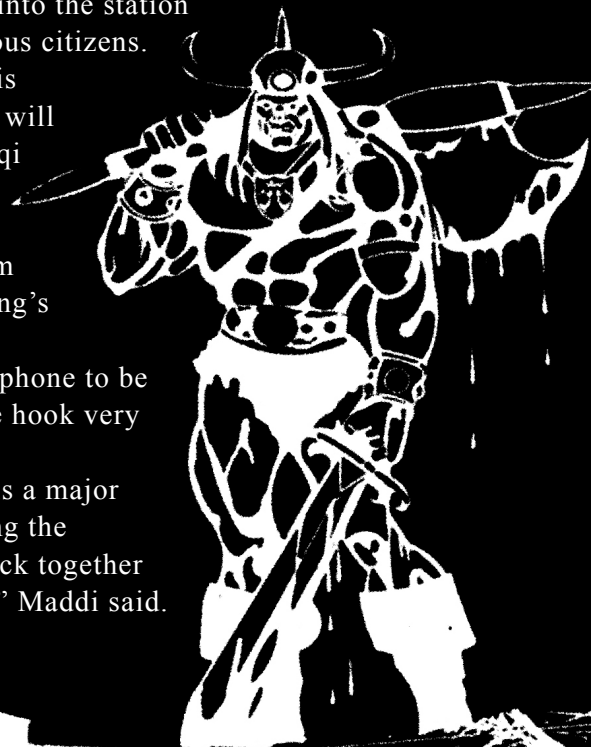
hopes it shows the community what teamwork can accomplish.

"I think that now that they see that we're working together, it's obviously going to benefit the entire effort between Iraqi security forces and the coalition," Maddi said. "When people see us together with the ISF, it's a good thing, and as the word spreads through the community that this is here, we'll start to get calls on the tip lines."

Maddi said that several calls had already come into the station from anonymous citizens.

"As this grows, people will call on the Iraqi policemen more and they'll let them know something's happening. I anticipate the phone to be ringing off the hook very soon."

"This is a major step in bringing the community back together toward peace," Maddi said.



# *Fallen Heroes*



*SGT Matthew Apuan  
D Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment,  
2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division*

# FOB Prosperity's Family Video

## New Release: Rated O POS



To donate  
blood or plasma  
go by the CSH.  
No appointment  
neccessary.